

February 17, 2017

To this Honorable Assembly:

I write here **today concerning the FY18 & FY19 budgets for the Arts and the Arts Endowment Fund under DECD** as an artist, an arts educator and as someone who has seen evidence over and over again in my 27 years as Founder and Executive and Artistic Director of the Judy Dworin Performance Project and for 44 years a professor of Theater and Dance at Trinity College, how deeply the arts reach people – how they inform, educate, and heal in critical ways. The arts are a direct pathway to our humanity—they help us to understand the world around us, they help to motivate us to develop and change the world around us and make it a more just and beautiful place.

The art that we see in public places teaches and instructs—it brings our attention to our environment, and helps us to consider the communities we inhabit through a new lens. It brings beauty to forgotten spaces. It educates through experience. It should not ever be omitted from our state budgets. **Please preserve the 1% for Public Art requirement.**

The arts instruct us on the fullest way to be human. I am reminded of this time and time again in every outreach that I do, but perhaps most particularly when I enter the doors of York Correctional Institution for women and, more recently and through the critical support of the Office of Arts for DECD, Cybulski Reintegration Center for men. In many cases, our residency work is the first arts experience for the individuals we meet – individuals that are now literally invisible to the general public. In incredibly moving outreaches to men, women and children affected by the massive cycle of incarceration that we face as a culture, we see change, we see growth, we see the germination of something important and constructive that builds and develops with the arts engagements to which they are exposed. As the social worker at York has said, (and we work in partnership with social service in all of our residencies) – “You get to the stories that we can’t reach and then we process it from there.” The arts have the capacity to heal and regenerate there is no doubt.

The funding that the Office of the Arts distributes funds pivotally important projects like our Dads and Kids program at Cybulski—a program that would not have been possible without their funding. According to the Connecticut Department of Correction, more than 15,000 men are incarcerated in the State of Connecticut. An estimated 6,000 are fathers of which 3,700 come from the greater Hartford area. More than 1,000 children in the City of Hartford alone have an incarcerated dad (based on the dads’ self-report). We work with some of those men and some of those children. For the children, the impact of their Dad being in jail is huge and it is largely a problem that they don't discuss or share. What will happen to these kids without interventions that help them express what's inside? For the Dads, they are in a place of transition, of positive change—motivation that needs an avenue to find its way. The arts become that for them—life altering. And ultimately this positive individual change will be community altering as well as these men return to begin from a grounded and more positive place to children who have been able to express the issues around their Dad being away.

The Office of the Arts is doing critical work in supporting critical work that has far-reaching impact on our communities. Their funds are vital. I urge you to keep the total allocation for the arts in the budget for a competitive process of receiving arts funding from them.

The arts are at the foundation of what makes a society just, inclusive, and beautiful – that provides a quality of life that resonates hope and possibility for all. **Support the work of the Office of the Arts and by doing so support a real quality of life in the state of Connecticut.**

Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspectives with you,

Judy Dworin
Executive/Artistic Director Judy Dworin Performance Project
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